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GROWING UP
UNDER TRYING CONDITIONS

(suitable for children + teens)

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ANNELIESE NOSSBAUM

1987

Anneliese Nossbaum

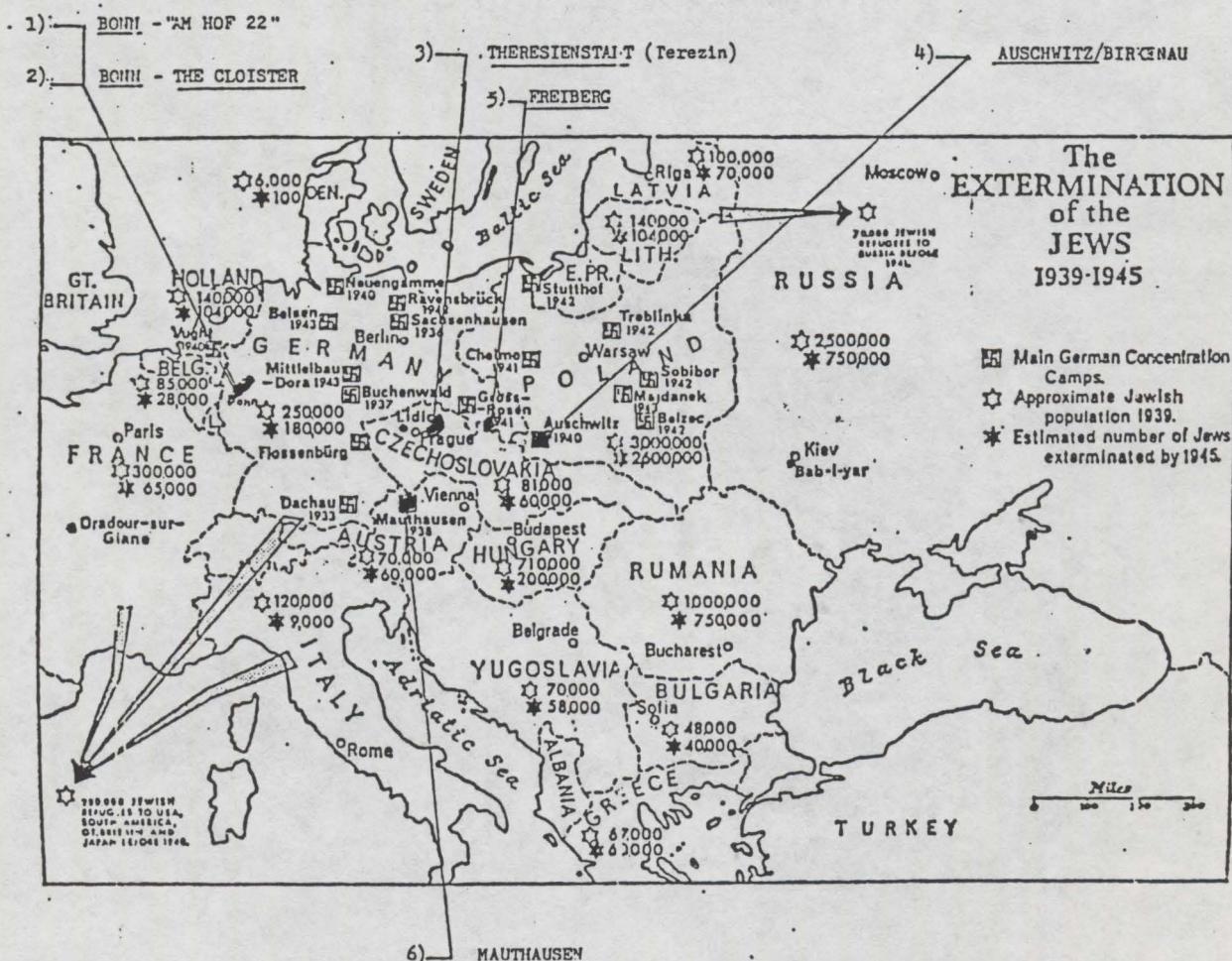
ANNELIESE NOSSBAUM

DATE OF BIRTH - 1929

- 1) BONN - AM HOF 22 (apartment) 1931 - 7/27/41
- 2) BONN - "THE CLOISTER" 7/27/41 - 7/42
- 3) THERESIENSTADT (Terezin) 7/28/42 - 10/44
- 4) AUSCHWITZ/BIRKENAU 10/5/44 - 10/11/44
- 5) FREIBERG/Sachsen (near Dresden) 10/44 - 4/14/45

16 Day Train Ride

- 6) MAUTHAUSEN 4/30/45 - 5/5/45 - LIBERATION
- 7) AMERICA 7/15/46



ANNELIESE NOSSBAUM WITNESS TO THE KRISTALLNACHT AND HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR

Mrs. Nossbaum was born in Bonn, Germany in 1929. She experienced the Nuremberg Laws, Kristallnacht, and survived four concentration camps before she was liberated. She arrived in the United States in 1949.

Mrs. Nossbaum is a speaker at the Holocaust Museum and Education Center of the Delaware Valley located at the Katz Jewish Community Center in Cherry Hill, New Jersey. Mrs. Nossbaum is married and the mother of two children and she has two grandchildren.

BONN SYNAGOGUE BURNING ON NOVEMBER 10, 1938



1879

Anneliese Nossbaum

What I am about to share with you, my life under Nazi rule, was written in response to a request by the Documentation Center of Bonn, Germany, the city I grew up in. I called it "GROWING UP UNDER TRYING CONDITIONS". They asked that I write about my childhood in Bonn, incl. friends, neighbors, school or any other experience I care to mention.

One can not write about the many things that occur over YEARS in a brief report, but certain "happenings" had an impact on my life and it is these that I wrote about. Smaller things than Auschwitz had to offer in addition to the Auschwitz experience, but IMPORTANT things, for they SHAPED me or PULLED me apart.

I will now read this report to you. I hope you will find it informative and interesting.

I hope you will find it

Anne Marie Hosselbaum

BACKGROUND: LIFE AS A CHILD

BONN: IN 1929 I WAS BORN IN THE EASTERN PART OF GERMANY, BUT THE CITY OF BONN IS THE ONLY HOME I REMEMBER. I LOVED THE AREA, LIVED 2 BLOCKS AWAY FROM THE MARKET PLACE AND CITY HALL, THE STORES, THE PARK. IN THIS TOWN OF GRACE AND BEAUTY, I COULD WALK TO EVERYTHING DEAR TO ME. BUT I LIVED IN THE NAZI ENVIRONMENT, AND, AS AN ^{any} 7-8 YEAR OLD, I LOVED PARADES, THE MUSIC, THE MANY COLORS. I WATCHED WITH SOME DEGREE OF EXITEMENT, BUT I, THE JEWISH CHILD, COULD NOT BELONG, ONLY OBSERVE, AND HAD AN UNDERLYING FEAR FROM WHICH THERE WAS NO ESCAPE.

STILL - I COULD WALK BUT ONLY UNTIL I WAS TOLD NOT TO ENTER, SIGNS SAYING "NO JEWS ALLOWED" BEGAN TO APPEAR. FOR EXAMPLE: THE PUBLIC SWIMMING POOLS, BEETHOVEN'S HOUSE OF BIRTH ETC. ^{during} FIRST DAYS OF NOVEMBER 1938, I SAW A MOVIE- IT FELT SAFE, SITTING IN THE DARK CONCENTRATING ON A STORY.

AS FOR MY HOME LIFE, MY FATHER WAS THE TEACHER & PRINCIPAL IN THE JEWISH SCHOOL AND CANTOR. BEING THE DAUGHTER OF THE TEACHER RESULTED IN A NUMBER OF PROBLEMS FOR ME. IN CONTRAST, KNOWING I WAS THE DAUGHTER OF THE CANTOR, I KNEW I WAS ASSOCIATED WITH SOMEONE OF RESPECT AND INFLUENCE. HOW I ENJOYED SEEING MY FATHER ON THE ALTAR, LISTENING TO HIS BEAUTIFUL VOICE AND NOT ALWAYS COMPREHENDING HIS SERMONS. THE SYNAGOGUE HAD BECOME MY SECOND HOME, HOW MANY HOURS DID I SPENT IN THIS SANCTUARY, FEELING PROUD AND CLOSE TO MY PEOPLE...?

MY MOTHER'S VOICE RANG OUT IN A SOLO "IN MY DISTRESS I CRIED TO THE LORD, HE ANSWERED ME BY SETTING ME FREE. THE LORD IS WITH ME-I SHALL NOT FEAR WHAT CAN I MAN DO TO ME?" WHAT CAN A MAN DO? WE FOUND OUT.....

*from the
"Hallel"
prayer*

THE POGROM, THE "KRISTALLNACHT" ARRIVED. SOMEONE RUSHED INTO OUR SCHOOL AND SHOUTED THAT OUR SYNAGOGUE - MY SYNAGOGUE, MY HOME - WAS ON FIRE. HOW CAN I DESCRIBE THE FEELING OF HELPLESSNESS, SADNESS, AS I WALKED ALONG MY FATHER'S SIDE, HE WALKING HIS BICYCLE NOW, KEEPING ME COMPANY, NEITHER ONE OF US SAYING ONE WORD UNTIL WE REACHED HOME? MY WORLD WAS BREAKING, I WAS FALLING APART... YOU KNOW ABOUT THE ROUNDUP OF JEWISH MALES, THE STORES DEMOLISHED. DURING THE NIGHT MY FATHER'S SISTER & HUSBAND ARRIVED, HE HAD BEEN THROWN INTO A WELL, A LOCAL POLICE MAN PULLED HIM OUT OR HE WOULD HAVE DROWNED.

OH, DID LIFE CHANGE AFTER THAT DAY. THE MOVIE I TALKED ABOUT? THEY HAD BEEN MY LAST TWO ENJOYABLE HOURS.. THE END HAD COME FOR ANYTHING CULTURAL - NO MORE MOVIES, NO MORE THEATER, CONCERTS, MUSEUMS... WE WERE JEWISH AND NOT WANTED ANY PLACE WE LIVED ACROSS THE UNIVERSITY, FROM MY WINDOW I COULD SEE PART OF BLACKBOARDS AND WOULD WONDER ABOUT THE LEARNING PROCESS THAT WENT ON. MY FATHER MENTIONED THAT HEBREW WAS TAUGHT IN ORDER TO READ OUR BIBLE IN IT'S ORIGINAL TEXT. THIS WAS FLATTERING AND CONFUSING: THEY READ OUR BIBLE AND I CAN NOT GO TO THE MOVIES?

NEWSPAPERS

IN EUROPE, DAILY NEWSPAPERS ARE ON DISPLAY IN A CASE, WALK OVER, READ ALL YOU WANT - IT'S FREE OF CHARGE.

anneks vospbaum

the Nazi's ANTI-SEMITIC / RACIAL, PROPAGANDA PUBLICATION

But our street also had "Der Stuermer" I would just look at the headlines and cartoons in passing for it gave me a sense of ill-boding. The stories and characters depicted and presented as "truth" - for EVERYONE to see and read about - these characters were MY people? These characters were nobody I could identify with.

This was a lie, I was confused.....

The park behind the university meant I walks every day to and from school. For a few minutes I was in touch with nature and pretty much alone - away from people at those hours. Not a bad idea for the latter years: nobody would call out to us: "JEWS". This happened when they thought we looked Jewish according to their image. Not to me, you see, I did not "look" Jewish with my blond hair, blue eyes and fairly straight nose. Once, my mother, who did not "look" Jewish either, stood with someone on the street in conversation when a Person approached her with the admonition: "aren't you ashamed to be seen with this Jew?"

I was able to escape this street harassment until we were forced to wear the "JUDENSTERN" (a Jewish six-pointed Star of David with the German word "JUDE" (Jew) in it).

Wearing the Judenstern forced me to walk with my sight downward, my head bowed. I did not want to see the reaction of the other people, it gave me a feeling of fear to draw attention, a feeling of rejection - it isolated me from them.

This isolation became an absolute necessity when facing the SS guards in the beginning. Later on, however, starting with Auschwitz, I learned to reverse this process as time and circumstances changed and our contact with the SS became a constant. I began to look at their faces and often wondered if they had a mother, a child, anyone - to whom they could show kindness, any "human" behavior? But mostly I was forced to look at their faces in order to gauge and read the "danger" on their expressions. It became extremely important to stay one step ahead in awareness and alertness, to try to anticipate any upcoming situation and to quickly prepare myself emotionally to this condition.

Anneliese Noykealm

BONN
THE CLOISTER - Convent

7/27/41 - July 41
We were forced to give up our apt + had to live in isolation in a convent on the outskirts in Bonn

The walls surrounding the garden are not high, it seemed incredible to me. We could have escaped so easily, but where to? Who would help? In 1941 the cloister had become my "prison". 474 people were interned, 7 people survived, I am one of the 7. My favorite place was a ditch in the garden, it provided some privacy and calmness, even wild strawberries grew there. Since I slept in my father's office, I still had my own "bedroom" - something other girls no longer had. I learned to clean floors, do the laundry etc. since my mother worked each day at a factory, something she was hardly used to but kept her mind occupied. We children ate with my father in the dining room, it was our duty to say "grace" after each meal for all. Services were held here on a regular bases, it included a wedding and a Golden Wedding ceremony just prior to deportation. These services were a source of strenght, at the time I had a deep believe in G'd and tradition. Tradition had been the focal point of my home life ever since I could remember. I also took piano lessons for 6 months during that time. My day was taken-up with school for a few months until lessons to Jewish children WERE FORBIDDEN. What heaviness we felt as we stood around the piano trying to sing our last song - we did not finish that song, we cried instead.

A few years earlier I had a kitten for a short time, but due to an accident she got stepped on and this incident had been my first introduction to death of something/ someone close to me. I did not want to repeat the ache of loosing something dear at that time, hence did not want a new kitten. But in the cloister I would visit the lawyer, " ", he had brought his kitten and it felt wonderful to stroke a warm, playful thing, I enjoyed it. This enjoyment came to an end too. We were the last once to leave the cloister - closed the door toward an unknown destination. It turned out to be Theresienstadt, or Terezin, as it is called today.

'info only'

The nuns were given 2 hours notice to evacuate, their food was still on the tables when we moved in

7/42 - Oct '44

Anne Marie Nowakowski

THERESIENSTADT (TEREZIN)

At this early stage, we walked into the Ghetto in contrast to later on when the trains moved in and out it's boarders. Our baggage was heavy, our hearts were heavier..... Theresienstadt? A garrison town....it was unfamiliar. Many women occupied one room in private houses, sick they were, one bathroom for all. We did see our men.

L414
Room 18
Things started to improve for our family as the youth homes opened up and became our home for about 2 years, shared by 13 girls, 5 of whom survived. We formed a group, hoping to go to Palestine together after liberation. Toward this goal we shared our thoughts, learned, until one or the other received a "slip" - the ticket to the trip into the unknown. My parents were also able to live and work at this youth home. They shared a room under the roof with another couple. The husband worked in a kitchen, hence we all had a little extra food - a great help when I was sick with jaundice, pleurisy and a touch of tuberculosis. My mother worked in the laundry room, my father was a "leader of a teenage boy's room". In addition, he taught different subjects on an informal bases (SCHOOL WAS NOT ALLOWED) and conducted religious services under the roof on a regular basis. Well, education continued, and NOW I was eager to learn as never before. This learning process took place after work. For many of us, work assignment was gardening on top of the fortresses surrounding the town of Terezin.

6/23/44
In preparation for the Inspection of the^{International} Red Cross, many changes took place, I can not list them in detail, they have been well documented. Here is our involvement: a cultural life developed in the Theresienstadt "Cafe". ^{opera} Carmen was presented at the Garret, my parents were part of the chorus, enjoying the escape from Ghetto life, the music, the extra food ration.... I could not listen to Carmen for years after that! Sick people had been sent away prior to the inspection, we "healthy" ones were able to stroll among the benches in the park, stop at the music booth, look and feel happier, buy things in special stores with special money. The Red Cross allowed themselves to be led like a bunch of sheep by the SS guards - NEVER going off the rosy path to see the old people in the barracks under the true conditions. The Red Cross should carry a mark of shame forever for this negligence, for they inspected THIS camp (a Ghetto) as an example of ALL concentration camps only. *They should have inspected Auschwitz*
After these gentlemen left, so did we: to Auschwitz.....we were no longer needed as showpieces!

(7 hr inspection: 2 hr. dining with the SS at the "Victoria" Hotel)

Oct '44

anne frank's diary

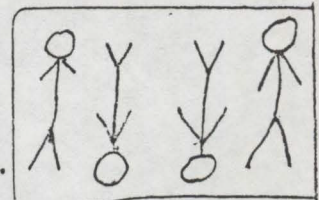
"The trip to Auschwitz took 3 days by train. Everyone had a horrible feeling within. This was because we had not been told where we would be going. We ended up in a part of Auschwitz called Birkenau. The scene was like this when we arrived: everyone was told to leave ALL of their belongings on the train and step outside and form a line. Now came the "selection" by which the individual was told to go either to the right or the left by an SS guard. Since all of the other children were going to the left, it was only natural that I wished to join them because in Terezin the children were treated a little better than the adults. The S.S. guard asked for my age and I replied that I was 14 even though I was 15. Maybe it was because I was tall and blond, he sent me off to the right with my mother.

The women went into a room and were told to undress in front of the guards. In another room, the hair was shaved off and then we took a shower. We were given summer cloths to wear (it was October!), which consisted of a dress and a pair of old shoes."

MY OBSERVATION: Very few people can pinpoint the moment when they cease to be a child and become a young adult: it is and should be a gradual transition.

It was this moment in MY life: the arrival at Auschwitz, the silent-inwardly screaming - good-bye-to my favorite 29 year old aunt who was gassed, the witnessing of the same good-bye between my friend and her mother, the undressing and shaving on all parts of my body in front of the sneering SS guards, than seeing my mother bald, in rags and terrified - THIS was the moment of my initiation into maturity.

" The women had no personal items at all! I did not brush my teeth for 8 months! Often, we were called outside to stand in line for hours, doing absolutely nothing. Lodging in the barracks wasn't any better. We slept on hard, wooden slats, and sometimes, IF we were lucky, got some straw or burlap to sleep on. There was no bedding, no pillows and no blankets! Four people slept in a single bed: The sanitary conditions were unbelievable. Open trenches served as toilet facilities and the smell was horrible. Food was served 3 times a day, it was awful and insufficient. We had to take cold showers on cold nights, had no towel to dry up with. There was no heating. After that, we had to stand for hours, night or day, just to be tortured.



On our fourth day, we were locked up inside the barracks. Outside, the weather was nice and bright and sunny and people were screaming while they were SHOT - outside our barrack we in the barracks were petrified. Would ~~we~~ be next? Would the SS guards come in and announce that we should step outside???

"The following day my mother and I were sent off with others in cattle cars to an airplane factory in Freiberg-~~g~~. It seemed like a good contrast to Auschwitz. We slept in a heated factory building, only two people in a regular bed, had a pillow and some sort of blanket. We now also had a coat to wear for the winter. We worked 10 hours a day, 7 days a week. Had $\frac{1}{2}$ hour for lunch AND toilet privileges. There always was a mad rush to accomplish both as bathroom privileges were not extended during working hours.

One day I could not accomplish both during that $\frac{1}{2}$ hour, so I sneaked out of work. When I came out of the bathroom, the SS guard, a woman, was there. She asked why I was not at work and slapped me. I returned to work and was frightened but laughed nervously about it. She saw me laughing, came over and slapped me again - it warmed me up!

Evenings were free except for standing in line at attention to be counted. The women were able to take a brief weekly shower with soap, no towel. But washing facilities were outside, it was too cold to wash your whole body with cold water and risk the chance of catching pneumonia, hence ^{we} never washed anything else but face and hands for months.

At the end of the year there was heavy bombing in the area (we were very close to Dresden). One night we were sent to unheated barracks and shortly thereafter the factory was bombed. This meant the end of work and for a few weeks we did nothing. That allows too much time for thinking.....

In the beginning of April 1945, ^{we} women were put in open cattle cars and an almost three-week trip began, destination Mauthausen. Those were three horrible weeks. There was hardly any room to lie down. We got wet from the rain, had only the cloths we were wearing, ^{for} 8 months. Perhaps the worst factor was that we only got fed every 3rd day. Between the "meal" of coffee or soup, we survived by drinking rain water.

We arrived at Mauthausen, were led to a special "Gypsy" barrack, slept in the mud. Dead people were laying outside, naked, waiting to be buried. I saw a child still-born."

To recollect the beautiful month of May 1945:

May 3rd: We are standing in line for a long, long time - only to be told to go back to the barrack. After liberation, someone knowledgeable informed me that the Zyclone B for the gas chamber had run out, the Americans had already occupied Linz, so their source of supply was cut off and we were not gassed.....

May 4th: I hug my sick mother and we weep at the sight of a white flag.

May 5th: I wish to thank the American soldiers who liberated us that day.

I wish to thank the American people who sacrificed and helped us by sending those soldiers.

I wish to thank the American Government who later opened the doors to us and provided us with all the opportunities a democracy has to offer.

US Army
Division:

11th Armored

some sort of blanket. We had a bed for lunch and toilet privileges. There
10 hours a day, 7 days a week. Had 1/2 hour for lunch and toilet privileges. There
always was a man with a mop to mop the floor as bathroom privileges were not extended
during working hours.
One day I could not accomplish bath during that 1/2 hour, so I sneaked out of work.
When I came out of the bathroom, the SS guard, a woman, was there. She asked why I
was not at work and slapped me. I returned to work and was frightened but laughed
nervously about it. She saw no laughing, came over and slapped me again. It scared me.

Evenings were free except for standing in line at attention to be counted. The
women were able to take a brief weekly shower with soap, no towel. But washing
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to Dresden). One night we were sent to untreated barracks and shortly thereafter
the factory was bombed. This meant the end of work and for a few weeks we did
nothing. That allows too much time for thinking.

turn

PACKING

concludes Not Baum

How does one prepare to leave ones "home-of-the-moment"?

Leaving our apartment in Bonn: We had sold a few items, took some. furnitures, books personal belongings to the CLOISTER since we had two rooms to furnish, my parents' small bedroom and my father's office, the "kitchen" went into the hallway. All our other belongings remained in the apartment and were confiscated by the Germans.

A year later, the time came to leave the CLOISTER for THERESIENSTADT. Time to carry or wear everything one thinks one needs for ALL seasons: what to take?? Bedding? Some cooking utensils? Toothpaste? a book? momentos? A child will outgrow the shoes.... How much CAN one carry, what does one select? How much fits into one suitcase? This nightmare, that was to stay with me for over 30 years, had begun..... To this day I see the very old, the very young, drag themselves and their belongings to their unknown destination. They walk and walk under the watchful eyes and guns of the SS guards, not fast enough.....NOT fast enough.....!!!!

We leave THERESIENSTADT, a little less to carry now - cloths wear out, the medicine is used up, the book is read a hundred times, but I take my reportcard AND a picture of my father from whom we had parted a few weeks earlier. We arrive in Auschwitz-Birkenau - what is left to carry now? ^{Nothing} NOTHING at all - no toothbrush, no comb, no reportcard, no shoes.... ONLY my father's picture: it was so tiny. During "appell" (standing in line), during showers etc. I would put the picture in my mouth (to prevent from being caught with it), later it would dry up again, back into my mouth.... it lasted only a short time and I cried bitterly when his face faded away and all that was left was a piece of wet paper.

What did I carry when I boarded the open train for a three-week ride to MAUTHAUSEN after Freiberg? Our hair had grown back a little and a young woman had made a "comb" out of metal in the airplane factory and sold it for one piece of bread. Also, we had been issued one piece of soap, soap gets wet and slimy, so someone else made a crude soap box for one piece of bread. I carried this comb, this soapdish - with the soap still in it - to liberation, to America, and make it visible to people today. Those two items are my witnesses to the Holocaust/outside my mother's Shabbath candlesticks which were hidden by a German lady in Bonn and returned to me after liberation. *Thank you,*

Seima, wherever you are

BIRTHDAYS

conclude Noisstrum

Which child does not love birthdays? Ah, on the eve of that important day in my life my parents always waited until they thought I was asleep, than tiptoed into my room and spread out those goodies on a table next to me.... I fooled them, I was never asleep and after they closed the door behind them, a warm glow would come over me as I fingered the presents in the dark and wondered what it could be... which one was the best of all?

My 16th birthday, (in Freiberg,) under those miserable conditions, that birthday was the most meaningful of all. Why? To this day I have not been able to figure out how my mother swung this deal (~~bad in math~~). Days before my birthday she would rotate her daily ration of bread, give it to a person for safekeeping to keep HER from temptation of eating it herself, ^{the} morning of my birthday she presented to me this 2-3 centimeter piece of bread and wished me well. I tried to share, she would only take a tiny piece for herself and gave another small piece to our friend. With this bread my mother had given me a gift that changed my character. She did not just still my physical hunger of the moment, she taught me how to give love and caring through sacrifice and perseverance.

Never a birthday passes today when this piece of bread, this noble act, will not re-appear in my mind.

(published
→

MOTHER'S DAY - 1945

It was a gorgeous, sunny day in Mauthausen, We had just been liberated a few days earlier. The only present I could give my sick mother now were the few flowers I picked in the meadow. It was done with love and high hopes for a future in freedom, but also with fear of losing her.

They were the last Mother's Day flowers I could give her..... *she died there following December*

* * *

PII Redacted

Anneliese Nossbaum

*unknown to us, my father
was already dead since the
prev. Dec. he died in a
satellite camp of Dachau.*

(Part of lecture to students in Germany)

PII Redacted

Connellie Norbaum

"Pretend, dear students, that when I will say "cancer" I mean Nazism, when I say "body" I mean Germany.

In 1973 Edward M. Kennedy Jr. was diagnosed as having cancer in the bone of his leg and in order to save his life, his leg had to be amputated. Do the words: "cancer/body" hurt after the amputation? Yes indeed, very much so! After an amputation one feels the "phantom pain" for a long time; a daily look at the stump could bring psychological pain for years to come.

STUDENTS, LOOK AT THIS "STUMP" OF HISTORY AND REMEMBER NAZISM AND IT'S CRIMES.

Young Kennedy went beyond the pain and sorrow. He started a new life, he went skiing, he became a role model for handicapped people. As far as is known, he is living a normal life.

STUDENTS, MOVE ON, YOU CAN AND SHOULD ENJOY LIFE.

Can Kennedy forget? NEVER, for every year he will have to undergo examinations to assure himself that the cancer has not returned to his body.

STUDENTS, YOU NEED THESE CONSTANT EXAMINATIONS.

Such, prejudice and persecution should never return to Germany; take actions if they do. Be proud of your past that was positive and beautiful, your literature or music for instance, but because of your establishment of and the involvement in the Holocaust, try to become a beacon of light for justice and equality. This might be the only way to raise your self-esteem once more and with it, your positive feeling about your country".

